

14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Christian brothers and sisters of the Quidenham Group of Parishes,

The Lord be with you!

I listened to an interesting lecture this week from the 'Science and Faith in Norfolk' group – it was Revd Canon Dr Joanna Collicutt talking on 'The Brain and Religion: What can neurobiology tell us about human faith?' At one point she briefly showed how measures to combat Covid-19 affect many people's experience of God in church – as if we had any doubt! She showed how firmly we separate body and soul in our thinking today and might say, for example, that if an experience of God was a product of our emotions induced by good music (or more extremely, artificially enhanced with drugs) then it isn't really an experience of God but a hallucination. For most of history people have not seen it that way and they felt that God was working through these things as well and so it was real. Some of you will know the story of Elijah asking for a musician to help him hear the word of the Lord to King Joram and Jehoshaphat ([2 Kings 3](#)) and it seemed real enough then, and many would bear testimony to the same sort of thing today.

From this week we are not allowed to gather for social reasons in groups larger than six. Our archdeacons warn us that we must not abuse the intention by then having social gatherings after church, chatting in large groups at the end. It is a privilege that when most people are not allowed to meet, religious groups have been given permission to meet, and we don't want this special dispensation to be withdrawn. Pastoral contact, social help, and passing on messages will have to be as it was during lockdown I guess. Sending out this letter is a way of keeping in touch and in return I do value the comments people make on it from time to time.

Our service times and locations this week, in the [pew leaflet](#), are **8.30am Banham, 9.30am Old Buckenham, 11am Quidenham (Harvest) and Kenninghall, 6.30pm New Buckenham (Evensong)**. If there isn't a service in your church building, then I encourage you to join us in any building where we are meeting.

Wishing you all the best,

Steve

[To help with prayers at home](#)

This week's Bible readings:

[Genesis 50.15-21](#)

[Psalm 103](#)

[Romans 14.1-12](#)

[Matthew 18.21-35](#)

## SUMMER 2020

expectation

reality



## This week's music choices from Peter Lotarius of Eccles

Amazing Grace: <https://youtu.be/NG0vH4WYChQ?list=RDNG0vH4WYChQ>

Dear Lord and Father of mankind: <https://youtu.be/rSfk37xsoik?list=RDrSfk37xsoik>

We love the place O God: <https://youtu.be/JU-tCzxbBPc>

## Sermon for Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September

A few weeks ago in my sermon in church I was talking about what I'd heard from a conference entitled, God and Pandemics, and was thinking about how the study of theology and the study of science work together, with implications for whether we describe the Covid-19 virus as good or evil.

I wanted to talk about things from that conference more sometime and here it is – I was thinking more about the difficulties that those scientists had and how theology and morality has a bearing on their discussions more than we might initially think. They were showing how difficult it is for any government to 'get it right' but getting it right involves theology. It might be assumed that theology is to do with religion only and so in my new role as Bishop's Interfaith Advisor I might interact with those of other faiths and talk theology for mutual learning. There is some of that, but this week at another meeting initiated by Norfolk County Council, they were keen to be sensitive to the different cultures in the county in the application of some of the Covid-19 measures they were having to take and so had invited me, amongst others, in case I could help there. I was struck by how the application of religion can be so desperately practical, and they recognise that in their dealings with different groups, and want insight.

In the scientist debate, where they also come face to face with moral dilemmas, it was clear that human beings have far more questions than any funding could deliver answers for so we have to decide between several good choices which ones to drop. One speaker reckoned that the government had achieved in 6 months what would normally take 10 to 20 years in developing a vaccine because of the concentrated application of new technology to the problem. This is wonderful, but as we've seen on our hospital wards with people unable to get treatment because the resources were focussed on Covid cases, so with research, and the speaker thought that Cancer research has been set back by ten years due to the change in emphasis now. Now, the 'right' question seems to be how to tackle Covid-19, but those investigating many other important things are now side-lined. What is the right way for governments, councils, hospitals to invest their money? Is public clamour, media spotlight and short term gains the guide?

A catch-22 situation I found interesting was that most breakthroughs in science come though 'randomly' from general research, but research focussed on projects with specific economic benefits reduces the breadth of that research so much that rewards are fewer. Surely focussed research must be better! Apparently not. But how do you get funding? Be focussed of course. And problems of the poor may not be addressed as the rich fund the research.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could get some guidance from God through all these difficult decisions! But it was clear as the scientists thought about that, that part of the character of God is that he didn't make us puppets, and he looks sometimes for us to grapple with these decisions, to work out how our faith applies in new situations. This wonderful creation is a gift of God to be explored with God. Pray for all those in positions of authority who have to make decisions that govern our lives, decisions that often mean that achieving one good thing makes achieving another good thing more difficult.

## Intercessions for Trinity 14

Let us pray to God, trusting in his mercy to all who call upon him in faith.  
Guard the church from too much concern for lesser things...  
Grant us grace to keep reverence and order but to seek first the salvation of souls.

May those who work in the world of finance be just and compassionate in their dealings...  
Give them wisdom, and the grace to use their skill not as an end but for the welfare of all.

Give us tolerance as we live and work with others...  
Since none can live to themselves alone, help us to care for our community.

Have mercy on all distressed by debt or financial worry...  
Turn by your grace the hearts of those who oppress the poor and needy.

Have mercy even at the last, on the greedy and unforgiving...  
Help us so to forgive that in the hour of death we may be forgiven.

In the spirit of forgiving, as we trust to be forgiven, we offer these our prayers.